

DRAMA



TRIBUTE TO GEOFFREY WHITWORTH
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Winter, 1951 no 23

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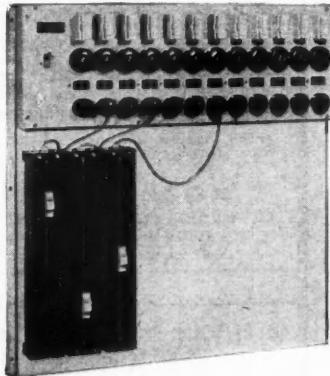
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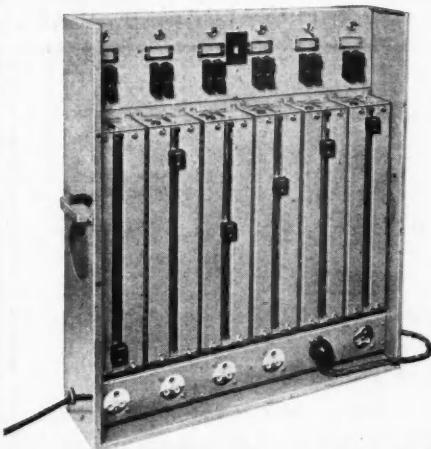
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DRAMA

The Quarterly Theatre Review

NEW SERIES

WINTER 1951

NUMBER 23

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A BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE PUBLICATION



GEOFFREY WHITWORTH, C.B.E.

1883—1951

TRIBUTE TO GEOFFREY WHITWORTH

AN APPRECIATION

by *Viscount Esher*

THIS number of DRAMA is rightly dedicated as a memorial and tribute to Geoffrey Whitworth, the founder of the British Drama League, for many years its Director, and latterly the Chairman of its Council. Those who follow will write with wider knowledge and in closer detail of the life-work accomplished by Mr. Whitworth, of which the League remains the lasting monument. But I think it would be fitting that I, as President of the League, should endeavour in a few words to place Geoffrey Whitworth in the pattern of his time, and to estimate his significance in the complicated and distracted whirlpool of modern life.

Probably there are many who do not enjoy the Christian slogan of equal shares. It is pleasant to have more than one's rightful share, justified by the complacent idea that this ought naturally to be allowed to those who have more brains and more personality than other people. Those who have been first hit by this revolutionary idea fancy it will not be so popular when it is rightfully extended to Indian ryots and African negroes. But all sensible people must accept the ruling religion of their time, if it is logical and just, and it is clear that those of us who have been fortunate enough to have such things must learn to live without wealth, as nations who have been fortunate enough to have such things must learn to live without power. A vacuum is left, and many hands are

stretched out to fill it. It has been called the problem of leisure; how to fill the empty hours both of those who once were rich and those who once were poor. No doubt many can employ these hours without difficulty, but this problem must not be impatiently denigrated as another outlet for welfare work. Surely our national future demands that we in these islands, who have led the world for so long, should seize the opportunities of the time and be the unquestioned centre of intellectual and cultural life. Many are working to this end, pioneers of the new world, probing our young democracy for ability, talent and genius.

Geoffrey Whitworth was one of these. He had a passionate belief, not only in the great future of British drama, soon to be embodied in a National Theatre, but also in the necessity for and the value of dramatic opportunity for all sections of the population. Part of the life of the people; the audience creating the actor and the actor creating the audience; civic theatres springing up by spontaneous provincial combustion; widespread interest shared and communicated in the living theatre and its heritage. This was the vision seen by Geoffrey Whitworth in his youth, and brought to fruition after many years of struggle and difficulty. It is part of the plan of the new world, the foundation stones of that renowned civilisation which we shall build upon the bombed ruins of the past.

FROM BOYHOOD TO PUBLISHING DAYS

by Frank Swinnerton

I WAS disappointed that *The Times* obituary notice of Geoffrey Whitworth made no reference to his childhood or his long association with the publishing trade; because the key to his character is to be found in the former, and his publishing experience was not only happy and important to himself but is of great interest in the history of modern publishing.

Geoffrey was born on April 7th, 1883, in London. He was the youngest child of William Whitworth, barrister-at-law; and had two brothers and two sisters. He was delicate from the first. Between the ages of three and four he developed spinal trouble which prevented him for some years from leading a normal life; but although forced to lie continuously upon his back he was perfectly content, playing all kinds of musical instruments and listening to the books which were read aloud to him. Since he could not go to school, he was taught at first by a governess and then by a tutor.

From a very early age he dramatised everything that came his way. At one time he would be lecturing to the family, staff, and neighbours on architecture, anatomy, or astronomy; while at Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, where his father had a country house, he would go alone to the cottage of the farm bailiff and hold a service, dressed in full canonicals—the surplice given by his brother, an ex-Eton collegian, and the coloured stoles made by a sister. He remained at home until he was seventeen, when he went to a tutor at Haslemere before going up to New College, Oxford. There he studied music, to which he was devoted; and throughout his life he was in the habit of playing whenever he wished to reach any important decision.

From Oxford he joined the staff of *The Burlington Magazine*, then edited by C. J. Holmes; and by 1907, when

I first went to Chatto and Windus as a reader of proofs, he was installed there as a reader of manuscripts. The firm was at 111 St. Martin's Lane, in what always seemed most mysterious premises; while there were many rooms upstairs one only was actively used (for luncheon by the partners), and the others were crammed with packages of old stock dating from remote ages. Partners, clerical staff, and packers were all on the ground floor, where five rooms opened off a long rack-lined passage stretching from St. Martin's Lane to the back of the Garrick Theatre in Charing Cross Road.

Geoffrey in those days sat in the last of the five rooms. It was always in twilight; for besides containing a safe or some metal filing cabinets it was rendered gloomy by dingy paint, a carpetless floor, and an inadequate reflector outside the window. Its occupant was not at all gloomy. He would sit there running a hand through his long straight dark hair, or would leap up to pace meditatively to and fro along the vast passage with his hands in his pockets. This pacing was a great habit of his; in later years, when Chatto and Windus had moved to lighter premises farther up St. Martin's Lane, it took him audibly past the rooms of other men, one of whom, Horace Ward, the good-natured, shouting, Cockney business manager, accused him of "walking the quarter deck." Ward detested the habit and allowed himself many jocose comments upon it. The pacing, nevertheless, continued; no retort, but a smile, was ever made; Geoffrey's good temper, to be sorely tried by myself in a long association, was indomitable. It was a part of his nature and his faith.

At that time the firm was controlled by four partners; the original Andrew Chatto, a kindly bearded man who

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was growing old; his son, Andrew Chatto junior, who was also kindly, but hurried and absent minded; Percy Spalding, dapper, copper-and-key jingling, whistling, and a great book-keeper; and Philip Lee Warner. Lee Warner represented the Menace of Modernity. He had found Chatto and Windus moribund; and he was galvanising the dead into activity. His methods caused consternation. He flew, blinking short-sighted eyes and whisking his long coat-tails, from room to room, humorously snarling, dictating endless letters, contriving and embarking on grandiose schemes. In an inner room, separated by a cupboard in which another hireling and I worked, there sat and scuffed a white-haired old scholar, bookworm, and tyrant who was Lee Warner's natural enemy. His name was Hytch.

I cannot stay to tell the full story of the inevitable explosion. I only travel thus far into it in order to show why it was that when Lee Warner's three year probationary period as partner ended he left Chatto and Windus. Andrew Chatto had already largely withdrawn. Hytch was retired. And Geoffrey and I, by an extraordinary chance, were thrown together into Lee Warner's small room with (though we did not know it) the firm's destinies in our hands. I was twenty-five; Geoffrey a year older.

I do not think we could have done what we did but for Lee Warner's brilliant gambling in the preceding years. I do not think it was intended that we should do more than read manuscripts, make reports, and hear nothing further of the matters we had considered. Nor did we in any way put our heads together to collect power. I remember making one remonstrance when we found our reports disregarded. I do not remember how soon we developed the habit of asking whether Mr. Spalding would receive what we called "a deputation," in the course of which, having been politely welcomed and offered chairs, we outlined

a plan for a book or some books. Nevertheless these deputations began to bear fruit; our reports were noticed and acted upon; year by year, aided of course by luck, but working as it now seems in extraordinary harmony, we had successes and made Chatto and Windus once again one of the leading firms of London publishers.

It is no part of this memorial to separate the components of what was in fact a joint and disinterested effort. We were both merry; our approach to publishing was as far as possible from solemnity; though different in temperament, and though arguing with warmth on non-publishing matters, we were always saved from strife by Geoffrey's unshakable charm and good temper. This last was astounding. And I must make it clear that Geoffrey's was the eager adventurousness which took us out of the conventional. He had a large acquaintance, dating from *Burlington Magazine* days, with artists and art-critics. He had familiarity with the social world. He was an educated man. And he was very lovable.

One series of triumphs belonged solely to him. He suggested one day that a book on Post-Impressionism was needed. A deputation was at once formed. Roger Fry was the recommended author. Geoffrey, who knew Fry, made the approach. Fry refused; but replied that his friend, Clive Bell, had just such a book in hand. Bell's *Art* arrived. It was, to both of us, irresistible. And, following this, there came, obviously as a result of our enthusiasm, a typescript entitled *Eminent Victorians*. The author, of course, was Lytton Strachey, the friend of Bell and Roger Fry. The sequels to that book are famous. They include not only the remaining works of Lytton Strachey but many books which would never have been offered to the firm but for the association already formed with Fry, Bell, Strachey, and others of a distinguished group. Geoffrey should have all the credit for this. It was the result of his ingenuity, followed

up by his tact and persistence, and made triumphant by his charm and personal popularity.

He continued for several years to give his concern to Chatto and Windus publications; but by now he had increased his always great interest in the theatre, and the British Drama League was in being. Young partners had come into the firm who wished to put their own ideas into practice.

An eventful and extremely happy chapter in Geoffrey's life—and in mine—had ended. Members of the British Drama League know what Geoffrey did for the National Theatre. He gave that work the devotion he had shown in publishing. He brought to a larger field the same enthusiasm, not for personal advantage or advancement, but for the greater breadth and influence of humane culture.

GEOFFREY WHITWORTH AND THE NATIONAL THEATRE

by Ashley Dukes

MY gift copy of Whitworth's book *The Making of a National Theatre* bears the inscription: "May 1951. To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow!" Looking at it to-day one can read into it more than the ironic comment of the often-defeated and ever-hopeful propagandist of the cause. 1951 had brought "to-morrow" into a clear and reasoned perspective; the foundation stone was to be laid, the rest would happen surely. The memorial of his life's work (though this in a personal sense was the last thing he would have thought of or desired) will be the building itself. When it comes to be opened he will not be forgotten. His hope has become certainty and his selfless ambition accomplishment; and that is how it should be (though it rarely is) in a man's life. Whitworth saw a chapter opened in the social history of Britain, and largely through his own turning of the page. Let him claim that undisputed epitaph, which gains in lustre from its owner's distinguished modesty.

I remember him for more than a generation as a figure in the cultural life of our time; indeed long before he founded the British Drama League or succeeded Philip Carr and Israel Gollancz as organiser of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre movement.

Our acquaintance went back to the years before the first World War, the great years of the Stage Society and the Granville-Barker productions at the various London theatres beginning with the Court in Sloane Square. And how steadfastly British and cautiously conservative the young publisher seemed to me then! On the score of certain foreign travels I claimed to know all about the "free theatres" of the Continent, the dramatists Chekhov, Wedekind, Hauptmann, Gorky; the directors Antoine, Stanislavsky, Reinhardt; and all the rest of the theatre men who had made reputations at about the turn of the century. It was the function of the Stage Society to bring the work of the new writers to Britain, and of honourable impresarios to introduce us to the new stagecraft; as in that London theatre year of 1911 when we had the *Ballets Russes* at Covent Garden following upon Reinhardt's Arabian Night fantasy at the Coliseum and Frohman's repertory of Shaw, Galsworthy and Barrie at the Duke of York's. But talking then with Whitworth and deferring properly to the judgment of a man a year or two older in years and experience, I had the impression that the Englishmen Masefield and Galsworthy and the repertory theatre

AT THE AGE OF 16



movement were good enough for him, with Granville-Barker as Shaw's interpreter and the acknowledged leader of the movement in our own country.

To this opinion and taste he consistently adhered, so that when the war of 1914-18 came and obliterated for the time being all internationalism in theatre or other forms of art, he was ready to take charge of a dramatic movement in Britain and to prepare that consolidation of the old repertory experience and new amateur effort which was the aim of the British Drama League. It may be true that as the League developed—and it is now more than a generation old—the professional side of its work grew less significant than the non-professional. For one thing, the repertory movement followed a more conventional line of dramatic activity than its pioneers had anticipated; and for another, the old charity-playing dramatic societies were reinforced by great numbers of new societies having wider artistic aims and alto-

gether different standards, which made them in some ways the inheritors of the task of repertory pioneering.

Neither Whitworth nor any of his fellow-founders of the League could have foreseen the trend its work was destined to follow. But one thing he perceived from first to last with the eye of faith and certainty: that was the part the League could and must play in keeping the idea of the National Theatre before the public. Sometimes he had loyal colleagues who were doubtful about this part of its policy; there may even have been frank opponents among theatre managers or actors or dramatists who were otherwise wholeheartedly with the League and its work. It was easier to bring about unanimity for the support of the Civic Theatre scheme which originated later; the National Theatre always had its own entrenched opposition, and in some quarters has it still. I think Whitworth never argued with those who could not follow him in

this matter; he went on his way with the same calm, ironical conviction that made him write "to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow" when the foundation-stone itself was being carven and inscribed. And this perseverance of the prophet (if not the saint) had its reward.

He was not the man to shirk responsibility for the erratic history of the National Theatre movement, even after he became its chief organiser, or for its often vacillating decisions. What he himself has called "the flighty favours" of the Committee, inclined at various times to the purchase of the Cambridge Theatre (an absurd notion if there ever was one), the Alhambra, the Phoenix and the sites of St. George's Hospital, Hampton's next to the National Gallery, and the gardens at the head of Portland Place. All of these suggestions he approached in the cheerful spirit of the explorer who will "try anything once." And he was more than justified when we of his Committee made what seemed the oddest choice of all, the purchase of the South Kensington site which proved in the end to be the most successful. I suppose that none of us

except Whitworth (and possibly G.B.S.) ever believed that a National Theatre would finally arise on that diminutive plot. Those who voted for buying it did so because we wanted to put half the money of the Trust into land, as a hedge against the inflation that must accompany or follow a second World War. When the deal went through he smiled away our cynical doubts and somehow carried G.B.S. with him; Lutyens was appointed architect and a model was constructed; and to-day we can see that it was all a very narrow escape. An endearing memory remains of Whitworth's single-minded simplicity throughout the business. He believed in the National Theatre even more than we believed in it ourselves, and with a faith that removed in the end not only mountains but a site.

The site, now on the South Bank, will not be removed again, nor, alas, will he be the first, as he should have been, to enter the doors of the eventual building. But the present inscribed foundation stone bears his wording, put forward in his own modest and impersonal way, and approved by all who were his colleagues in fulfilling the Trust.

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE AND ITS FOUNDER

by F. S. Boas

HISTORY is full of examples of idealists and prophets who conceived great schemes which were not realised till after they had passed from the scene. It was the good fortune of Geoffrey Whitworth to be numbered among the happy few who not only originated a far-reaching plan but lived to see it brought to accomplishment in the British Drama League.

As sometimes happens, it was an accidental circumstance (we have been told) that provided the starting point for what was to prove a big develop-

ment. In the autumn of 1918 Whitworth happened to attend a play-reading in a Y.M.C.A. hut attached to the Vickers Armstrong works at Crayford, Kent. He was thereby fired with the idea of initiating a movement which would, in addition to serving as a focus of the renewal of national interest in the various aspects of the stage, also encourage amateur play-readers. From the first Whitworth showed what is the hallmark of a leader—the flair for gathering round him and inspiring expert and enthusiastic lieutenants. A small body of these held a private

meeting early in 1919 at which THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE was founded, its declared objects being "to assist the development of the Art of the Theatre and to promote a right relationship between Drama and the life of the community."

The public inauguration of the League took place on June 22nd, 1919, at the Haymarket Theatre, with Sir Michael Sadler in the Chair. This was, incidentally, of special interest to myself as I had been closely associated with Sadler in the Oxford University Extension movement and I knew well his infectious enthusiasm for the various cultural arts. The list of illustrious speakers fully illustrated Whitworth's view that the League should include representatives of every interest relating to the theatre as "*par excellence* the art of the people." He himself became the first Honorary Secretary, with Lord Howard de Walden as President, Robert Mond as Honorary Treasurer (both of whom contributed sinews of war) and Harley Granville-Barker as Chairman.

From the first one-room office in Southampton Street a move was made in 1921 to two rooms at 10 King Street, Covent Garden, and thence in 1925 to larger premises in 8 Adelphi Terrace. This was necessitated largely by the rapid growth of the League's library. Owing to Whitworth's representations the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust had made an annual grant of £750 for three years for the library, and an additional grant towards the expenses of the move. The nucleus of the League's unique theatrical library was formed by the gift in 1921 by Miss Horniman of the valuable collection of plays and prompt copies used at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. In 1925 another very important accession was received as a loan. The executors of the eminent dramatic critic and translator of Ibsen, William Archer, placed his collection of over 1,500 books relating to the theatre in the charge of the League, pending

the establishment of a National Theatre.

Mainly under Whitworth's initiative the League had already begun to establish international connections. In 1922 through the generosity of its President and others it raised over £1,000 to cover the transfer to London from Amsterdam of the International Theatre Exhibition which was opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum by the Dutch Ambassador. In 1924 the League furnished a special section on the art of the theatre, opened by Miss Ellen Terry, to the British Empire Exhibition which otherwise would have left it in the cold.

In 1926 it took the gallant venture of nominating the amateur society of Huddersfield Thespians, with their production of Sladen-Smith's one-act play *St. Simeon Stylites*, to compete in the New York Little Theatre tournament in which they won the \$200 prize.

This overseas success led to the institution, due largely again to Whitworth's initiative, of the National Festival of Community Drama in which the winning teams of actors compete in a final "show" in London for Lord Howard de Walden's silver challenge cup. The first of these finals, in which the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society won the prize, was held on February 6th, 1927, at the New Theatre, in the presence of the President of the Board of Education. Indeed, the presence of the Minister of Education at so many of the National Finals, since those early days, stresses the educational value of the Festival. The long series of similar competitions that have followed up to the present day have raised in a remarkable degree the whole standard of amateur acting.

Meanwhile the League was exerting a powerful influence throughout the country by the affiliation with it in growing numbers of professional organisations and local societies, by its Annual Conferences in large provincial towns, by its schools for amateur producers, and by the publication

of DRAMA. The first number, edited by Whitworth with the advice of a consultative committee, was published by Chatto and Windus in July 1919, price two shillings. Among its contents was a coloured frontispiece by Lovat Fraser, a message from Sir Frank Benson, and "Notes on Rehearsing a Play" by Granville-Barker.

In 1928 a set of lectures was arranged to celebrate Ibsen's centenary, under the patronage of the Norwegian Minister. Whitworth and I were in charge of the proceedings. When I wrote to Sir Edmund Gosse to invite him to open the series he replied that as he had introduced Ibsen to English readers, he would have taken it ill if he had *not* been invited. Bernard Shaw was to give the last lecture, with Dame Madge Kendal in the Chair. There was naturally a crowded audience but as the hour of delivery drew near there was no sign of G.B.S. Whitworth and I spent some anxious moments till as the clock struck the hour he rushed in and received an admonishing rap on the shoulder from Dame Madge, who was no respecter of persons.

In 1930 Whitworth further extended the continental connections of the League by representing it at the congress of the *Comité Internationale pour les Théâtres Populaires* at Liège, and by heading a League party to the Oberammergau Passion play. This was followed in 1934 by his taking another party to the Moscow Theatre Festival.

In 1924 Mr. Alec L. Rea, the professional theatre manager, succeeded Robert Mond as Hon. Treasurer and in 1932 the place of Harley Granville-Barker as Chairman of the Council had been taken by Viscount Esher. It was under these auspices that in 1935 another move took place, to 9 Fitzroy Square, which gave room for the ever increasing administrative work and library. The new premises were officially opened by the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Cromer, on July 28th. They have recently been expanded by the

acquisition of No. 10. Another notable development was the inauguration in 1927 of successful Drama Schools, which have continued to be an important part of the League's activities. Though the war inevitably interfered with the work of the League its library performed a national service by providing sets of plays for H.M. forces both near and far. In this time of stress a happy and memorable interlude was the visit of Her Majesty the Queen to the League's headquarters on December 2nd, 1943. By a freak of fortune the photographic record of the visit included the Queen, Lord Esher and several others, but omitted the Director —a plain case of *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

In 1948 Lord Howard de Walden had been succeeded as President by Lord Esher. And in this year also Mr. Whitworth laid down his office of Director of the League he had built and loved, and became Chairman in the place of Lord Esher. The occasion of his resignation was marked by a ceremony at the British Academy's rooms when Lord Esher, on behalf of the members of the League, and in the presence of the Minister of Education, presented Geoffrey Whitworth with a modern clavichord and a cheque. Alec Rea had given place as Treasurer to Sir Frederick Minter and more recently to Charles E. Trott. In this Festival year of 1951 Whitworth was still happily playing a major part in the counsels of the League when suddenly, on September 9th, death took him. But the work he had so wholeheartedly accomplished will live on and may, in the future, further still more than hitherto what was dear to him, the close co-operation of the professional and amateur stage. His life and labour throughout were completely in the spirit of my schoolfellow, Sir Henry Newbolt's, noble poetic exhortation to his son,

To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize.

SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES

by Frances Briggs

MY first meeting with Geoffrey Whitworth was in the late summer of 1919 when I called at his office at Chatto and Windus, the publishers, in St. Martin's Lane. The appointment was made by Mrs. Whitworth who had written to me about the vacancy at the British Drama League which had been founded only two months before, and which she said was "full of interesting possibilities."

I shall never forget my first impression of Mr. Whitworth sitting in a dark little office with books piled up on the floor all round him, and his desk covered with papers. I saw a man of small stature in his middle thirties with an unusually high intellectual forehead over which fell a lock of dark hair. His long, thin fingers were playing with a pencil as he outlined his hopes and plans for the League. I was then working for Lilian Baylis at the Old Vic and needed a change from the long hours there. The idea of helping to build up this League which had only just been born was very attractive. The job was offered to me, and on October 1st, 1919, I started work as Mr. Whitworth's secretary in a small office on the fifth floor of Dudley House, Southampton Street. Mrs. Whitworth superintended the work on three or four mornings a week, and Mr. Whitworth came along every afternoon after spending his morning at Chatto's.

During those early months, the little room was the mecca of many of the most interesting theatre people of the day. Harley Granville-Barker, Laurence Binyon, William Archer, John Drinkwater, Albert Rutherford, Edith Craig, Lena Ashwell, are only a few of the people I remember who climbed those steep stairs to talk and discuss with Mr. Whitworth all kinds of problems connected with the theatre.

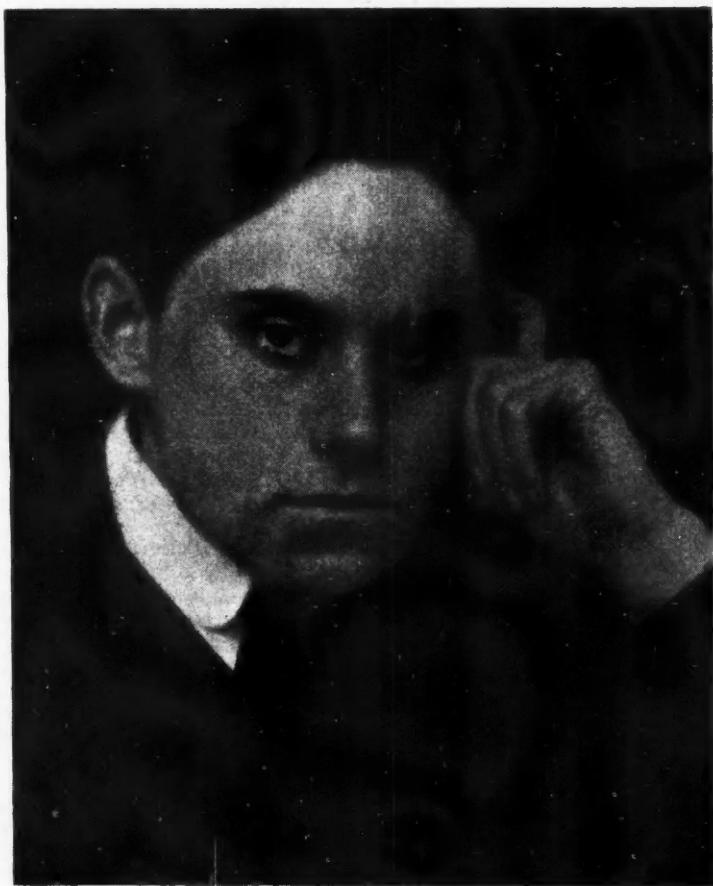
To me, the young secretary, sitting quietly in a corner, those conversations opened up a new world and provided a thrill which has never been equalled. They also gave me a glimpse of the quiet influence which Mr. Whitworth through his personality and fertile brain was beginning to wield.

Although we had such a tiny office and next to no funds, no fewer than nine Committees were set up within the first few months of the League's existence. A glance over the names of the members of those Committees shows the wealth of talent Mr. Whitworth was able to gather round him. Not a small achievement for a man who was not then of the theatre but who had only a burning and tireless enthusiasm for it.

I well remember one Committee under the chairmanship of Arnold Bennett which drew up a grandiose scheme for a Theatre Club with spacious premises—an elaborate Information Bureau with correspondents in every foreign country. This Committee had many meetings and considering that the League had a capital then of only £200 and no prospect of more, a good deal of faith was needed to take these plans seriously. This Committee's work was perhaps the most ambitious, but it is a remarkable fact that a great deal of the general work then planned by the Council, and which seemed rather fantastic, has now been achieved.

The time came when the growing membership enabled us to move to slightly better premises. I often wish a snapshot had been taken of that move. We borrowed a barrow from a Covent Garden porter. On it we piled our typewriter, the few files and books, and then, with Mr. Whitworth and I holding up the end of the barrow to prevent our precious goods from slipping off, we pushed it from Southampton

AT THE AGE OF 26



Street to King Street where at No. 10 Mr. Whitworth was able to have an office to himself for the first time.

Finances were still a constant worry. Mr. Whitworth himself worked most generously for a mere pittance, and we had to look at every penny. Indeed, the League would have fallen on the rocks if it had not been for the Costume Balls organised in three consecutive years by Mrs. Whitworth. It was the

Carnegie Trust which finally put the Library and therefore the League on a firm foundation.

The move to King Street came at the end of the first year of the League's existence, and by that time I had grown to know my chief and his ways. When he was interested in a subject or idea, it was all-absorbing, and it was very difficult to get him to attend to anything else. At such times

it was often difficult to persuade him to answer his letters. His interest in broad ideas sometimes led to a disregard for details. He often lost things and was always surprised when they were found on his desk in front of him. I have even known him to throw cheques into the wastepaper basket and carefully preserve their envelopes!

In all the thirty-two years I knew Mr. Whitworth, he was never once cross with me or lost his temper. Indeed when I did stupid things I often wished he would be angry with me so that I could have been less angry with myself. He had an unusually whimsical sense of humour and was unfailingly courteous. I can imagine no-one more kind and considerate. He had a gay enthusiasm which was

irresistible. I very soon felt a deep affection for him which will never die. It was characteristic of him and Mrs. Whitworth that they invited me to go with them to Buckingham Palace, when in December 1947, at the culmination of his work as Director of the League, the King invested him with the C.B.E.

As the years rolled on, our staff increased. We moved to Adelphi Terrace and then to Fitzroy Square; but on looking back I cannot help feeling that the best years were those spent in Dudley House and 10 King Street, when I was privileged to share a great man's vision and to see the beginnings of the movement which is now known throughout the country and which will always be identified with his name.

LAUNCHING THE CIVIC THEATRE SCHEME

by Norman Marshall

IT was in the third year of the war that I was roped in by Geoffrey Whitworth to join a small committee he was forming to work out details for his "Civic Theatre Scheme." What he proposed to do was to submit to the Government a plan for the financing of theatres by municipal authorities. I was sceptical about the likelihood of the Government paying much attention to such a scheme at the height of the war, and when the document we drew up had been submitted to the Prime Minister and formally acknowledged, I thought we should hear no more of it. But I had under-rated Geoffrey Whitworth's patience, persistence and far-sightedness. For six years he devoted much of his time to interesting members of Parliament in the scheme, talking and writing about it and getting others to talk about it. In 1948, in the face of only mild opposition, a clause was inserted in the Local Government Act enabling municipal authorities to spend up to the value of a sixpenny rate—equivalent to a possible

annual expenditure of eight million pounds—on building and running theatres.

It will be years before the immense possibilities of this can be fully realised because for the meantime no theatres can be built, though already many municipal authorities are using the powers granted by the Act to acquire and convert existing buildings and to subsidise local companies. When at last it is possible to take full advantage of these powers I doubt if it will be remembered that the Civic Theatre Scheme was largely due to the vision and pertinacity of a single man, for Whitworth deliberately avoided taking any credit for his scheme, believing that it had more chance of adoption by the Government if it was not connected with the name of any individual person. It was typical of him that he worked for years on a scheme which he knew could bring him none of the rewards for which most men work—prestige, power, money, gratitude.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

by J. W. Lambert

STILL we have no good new plays. Everybody knows, of course, that the managers, the impresarios, the business men of the theatre are the villains of this particular piece; everybody knows that it is their cowardice, their conventional minds, their pitifully narrow conception of what the public wants that withers the fresh green of the British drama, and condemns new works by keen, intelligent dramatists to moulder unperformed.

Therefore we rejoiced when we heard that Christopher Fry, Peter Ustinov and Alec Clunes were to judge a play competition organised by the Arts Theatre for a £700 prize. Hope for the British dramatist flowered again; but as it turned out both faith and charity were needed when we were confronted with the three plays selected, from more than 900 entries, as possible prize-winners. Nobody expected them to be neat little drawing-room comedies, especially in view of a rather depressing condition that they were to be of "contemporary significance." But certainly nobody expected them to turn out quite so wild and woolly and full of fleas.

The first candidate, *Poor Judas*, by Enid Bagnold, no beginner in the theatre, set out to explore the betrayals of himself and others forced upon a man of envious temperament and feeble will. An interesting subject: but the piece was ruined by bad carpentry and worse dialogue. Next came C. E. Webber's *Right Side Up*, a parable about a young man who stands on his head in order to see people in their true light, and who is dragged out of his arrested development, or *sancta simplicitas* if you prefer it, by spending the night with a spiv's mistress. This whimsical balderdash, not without a few effective moments,

seemed to owe much to William Saroyan, although even he might have flinched from such lines as "I'm a great big balloon and you're the air."

Right Side Up is a silly little play; *Saint's Day*, which deservedly won the prize, is crazy but quite big. It is terribly over-crowded; John Whiting, author of the equally rudely received *Penny for a Song*, has apparently tried to write not merely a play of "contemporary significance" but a play with everything of contemporary significance crammed in. Into the setting of an ordinary English country house he packs allusions to the corroding influence of fear and isolation, the artist's divorce from society, the narcissistic remoteness of the Church, the irresponsible desperation of the rootless fighting man, the passive misery of refugees—all this and I dare say more besides. No wonder the plot degenerates into a grotesque nightmare. None the less much of the incident, taken moment by moment, is truly dramatic, the character-drawing at once sharp and rounded. Acting opportunities abound.

Still, one cannot blame the impresarios from backing away from the idea of putting any of these plays on for a run; if they were the best Messrs. Fry, Ustinov and Clunes could find, we cannot put all the blame on the business men for our habitual trickle of farcical comedies and revivals. And at least these second-bests have given us some fine acting—for instance from the unknown Joseph Tomelty in George Shiel's Ulster comedy, *The Passing Day*: a piece in itself well above average because it springs from a community observed at first hand; because it has roots. Mr. Tomelty's slovenly shamble, the delusive geniality of his creased pink face and white

hair, the watchful vagueness of his whole manner, perfectly filled in the background of a small-town tradesman, mean, tyrannical, blinkered, yet aware of having missed something.

Then, by contrast, we had Sir Godfrey Tearle in a revival of Pinero's remarkably exciting, heavily contrived, and determinedly moral drama of respectability at bay, *His House in Order*. If the many powerful emotional situations are exploited rather than explored, never mind: at least the situations are there, and Sir Godfrey, who played a small part in Alexander's production 42 years ago, made much of them. As Hilary Jesson, a sentimental man of the world at large in his brother's distraught household, he was bland, sympathetic, vastly persuasive; with a smile like a sunset, a voice like a 'cello, and eyes like a St. Bernard, he commanded the stage superbly, even though a timid production forced him to scale his performance down. Mary Kerridge's Nina, the second wife whose predecessor's memory is always being flung in her face, was a lightweight, but struck exactly the right air of slightly tawdry distress.

The end of August brought us another heavily-contrived play full of powerful situations. But alas, if the production of *His House in Order* was dangerously half-hearted, that of *Ardèle* is disastrously muddled. M. Anouilh here displays an assortment of people in the grip of desire, a woman driven mad by her own prurience, a pair of hunchbacks who, with cynical sentimentiality, are made to symbolise true love, and a pair of children who horrifically ape their elders. Sparkling with absurdity, Isabel Jeans, Nicholas Phipps and Ronald Squire are delicious until they are asked to sound a note deeper than that of brittle comedy; only George Relph is throughout enchanting as a bumbling old general, desperate but dogged, who divides his time between his mad wife and the housemaid. *Ardèle* is not a great play: as usual M. Anouilh dodges the ques-

tions he has raised—this time, as in *Fading Mansion*, breaking off the discussion with a quite arbitrary double suicide. But it is a much better piece than this fumbling production would lead us to suppose.

Ring Round the Moon, *The Little Hut* and *Point of Departure*, to take three recent examples, show that we can produce French plays with speed, discipline and certainty; even English plays sometimes receive this desirable treatment; but it remains true that these are the attributes of good theatre in which we have most to learn from the French. They are also the attributes most pointedly demonstrated by the Madeleine Renaud—Jean-Louis Barrault company, which Sir Laurence Olivier's enterprise (and courage, for he must have risked substantial losses) recently brought to the St. James's.

It is no mere chance that we have no English word, but borrow a French one, for the all-embracing quality of ensemble; here lies our weakness, and it is in an attempt to overcome it that we make much of the producer. The production of these French plays is very simple in outline; but the "playing-together" is in itself a joy to watch. Oddly, the one member of the company who tends to break through this unity is M. Barrault himself; in his theory-ridden determination to act with the whole of his body he has developed a miming style which, though expressive enough for ten, is obtrusive and, after a while, wearisome; it is as though we were watching Mr. Martyn Green, fresh from Ko-Ko, playing Hamlet in the same style. The *Commedia dell' Arte* dance which makes quicksilver of Molière's Scapin fits poorly on Marivaux's Dubois, though both are scheming valets.

Nevertheless the Marivaux piece, *Les Fausses Confidences*, provided, with its elegant mixture of sentiment and satire, the most beguiling of the visitors' productions. The grace and radiance of Madeleine Renaud, as a wealthy young widow, trying to coax

"TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT"
Donald Wolfit (centre) in Tyrone Guthrie's production at the Old Vic.



Photo: John Vickers.

courage into a nervous suitor, teasing him and enslaving him, were a revelation of wide-eyed delicacy; and Jean Desailly, as the young man, presented the very image of flurried goodness of heart with extraordinary lightness of touch. A few nights later this same pair were playing, with equal sympathy, a middle-aged couple in Salacrou's "documentary" of the Resistance, *Les Nuits de la Colère*: she, the mother whose home and children come before patriotism and before friendship, he, the weak, self-indulgent man of divided loyalties, who wavers and is lost. Next they were Jupiter and Alcmena, the outrageous and the outraged, in Molière's *Amphytrion*. This is versatility amounting to virtuosity.

M. Barrault was perhaps at his best in *Les Nuits de la Colère*. As a betrayed Resistance leader he played a rather

prosy, sermonising part with great simplicity and force—and was not the force all the greater because for most of the time he kept his hands in his pockets? He almost, but not quite, brought off the startling change of tone called for in *Oedipe*, Gide's uneasy mixture of ironic farce and tragedy. But his biggest, toughest role came in what was no doubt the climax of the season, Claudel's *Partage de Midi*. This celebrated play, written fifty years ago, is one of those pieces of erotic religiosity in which sin, sex and salvation are served up in a heightened prose calculated to lull the intelligence and excite the cloudier sort of mystical ecstasy (cf. *The Cocktail Party*).

This production, a very fine one by M. Barrault himself, served to introduce to us the prodigious talents of Edwige Feuillière: tall, auburn-

haired and infinitely graceful, she combines in her person a greater degree and range of talent than I have ever met with in any single actress. Playing, here, a *femme* conspicuously *fatale*, she can, and does, modulate in a few seconds from the soaring glories of Edith Evans's Millamant to the quivering pathos of Peggy Ashcroft's Juliet, at the same time radiating a sensuous warmth, indeed a sensual passion, seldom projected from our stages. Mme. Feuillière left me, at any rate, in a daze of admiration—and quite unmoved. Watching her act was like watching some superb machine; and I had the impression that she would be no more and no less wonderful if she were playing on an empty stage in the manner of Ruth Draper—and that, I am afraid, is not a compliment. M. Barrault, alongside her, playing a man in search of God, seemed to disappear; and when he made love to her somehow only his hands were visible, performing a bizarre ritual dance of their own. Yet his interpretation was deeply felt; and when, alone in a deserted graveyard waiting for his woman, he picks up a cross and presses it for a moment to his forehead,

he makes his agony piercingly keen to the most sceptical observer.

In order to end upon a note at once patriotic and justifiably cheerful, I have kept until last the first of the Old Vic's productions under the new régime. *Tamburlaine the Great* provides a stupendous, ear-splitting, eye-filling send-off. The credit for an extraordinary achievement must be shared between Tyrone Guthrie, Donald Wolfit and Leslie Hurry—not to mention the stage manager. This terrifying panorama of rapacity and savagery comes before us with a positively Elizabethan speed and relish. Mr. Wolfit bestrides the stage like some monstrous Mongolian Goering, avid for blood. He spouts the poetry, and carries off every blood-stained scene, with skill and power; he plays with his sons as some great grizzly bear might play with its cubs; roaring at the captive kings harnessed to his gilded chariot, he commands a scene of dazzling barbaric splendour. Then, as he burns the Koran, the smoke eddies sombrely across the raw red canvas of his tents. The shadows thicken—and the monster, instead of crashing to a terrible doom, is taken ill and dies almost in his bed. No comfort for moralists there!

THE RIVERSIDE THEATRE by Guy Sheppard

THIS theatre, erected in the Festival Gardens at Battersea Park, is the result of one of those collaborations between architect and artist so much under discussion at the present time. In this case the artist was a stage designer, and the result seems proof that such a collaboration can be both happy and successful.

The specification was onerous. The building was to house not only evening performances in the tradition of Victorian music hall, but also short operas, ballets, and, in the daytime,

puppet shows. It must have an especially intimate atmosphere, be reasonably proof against the assembled noises of the Gardens (fireworks excepted); at the same time the temporary structure should maintain the elegant qualities of those in the earlier Cremorne or Vauxhall Gardens, and be ultimately demountable for erection elsewhere.

The original conception, which was that of the stage designer, and which has been adhered to in a remarkable way, was to exploit the structural properties of tubular steel-scaffolding,

and its possible resemblance, when welded into stanchions and beams with rings of steel or other motifs, to the wrought ironwork popular in Regency buildings. This basic skeleton of a lacy lightness was exposed both internally and externally wherever possible and its "functionalism" was tempered into a witty pastiche of Regency, Victorian and contemporary idiom by the decorative treatment of the wall cladding and interior ornament between the bays of the steel structure.

The evening shows, with the music hall backchat between chairman and audience, called for that intimacy of contact best established in the Georgian plan with its apron stage and encircling boxes; but the plan has been adapted by running the boxes together to form a promenade continuing right round the circle. It is translated into a double horseshoe of stanchions supporting circle, gallery and roof, with a further series of bays, concentric with the main curve of the horseshoe, containing the staircases, gallery and back circle seats, and, on the ground floor, box offices, main entrances and bar. This last projects yet further onto a small balcony. The sides of the horseshoe, raking down to the proscenium opening in the larger mass of the stage tower, are not disguised in the treatment of the building, and therefore express, in the shape they define, its theatrical purpose. The building is sited so that the bar, between the entrance doors, looks out onto the river vista, and the stage tower is screened in the large trees alongside the Riverside Parade. The back wall, which is usually a large and expressionless blank, has been given a decorative treatment in contemporary style and displays a pattern of Commedia masks.

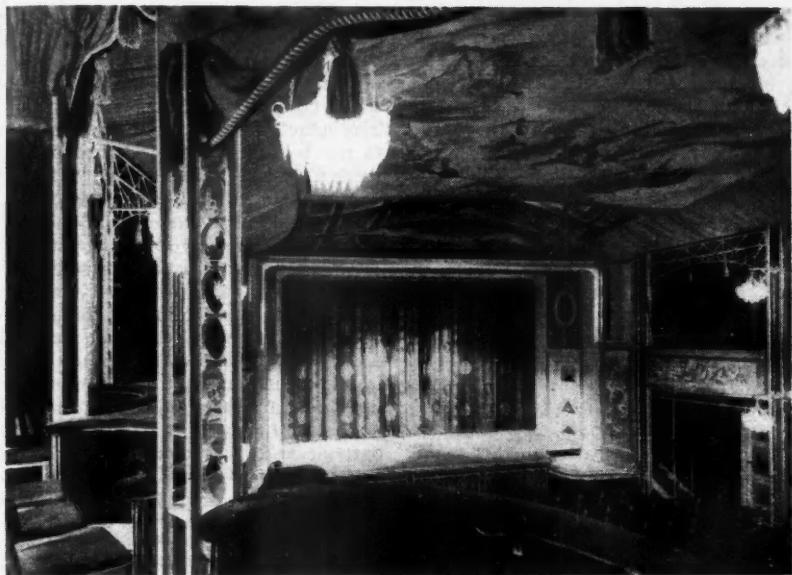
The steel frame is put together with scaffold clips, and the outer walls are formed by prefabricated panels of substantial timber framing in two parts, dividing just below the window balconies so that the sections are small

enough for transporting. The outer surface is of plaster on Colterro lathing, and the inner of glass velour stretched over wire mesh. The circle and gallery floors are of light-weight concrete in removable trays of aluminium angle, which has also been used to support the central sound-boards of the ceiling. These were prefabricated of wood and wall-board, and back-filled with similar concrete to prevent reverberation.

In the side walls tall shuttered windows provide the amenity of fresh air on a possibly warm summer evening, and assist the acoustics when shut, being built up as modified Helmholtz absorbers with perforated metal panels. Doors below them ensure a swift clearing of the house between the numerous shows, or in an emergency.

The exterior colour scheme of pale Wedgwood blue relieved with white motifs, doors and windows panelled in yellow, and roofs of copper-green, fits happily into the background of trees. At night no floodlighting is used, but the building is illuminated by a series of pendant lamps of somewhat Victorian aspect made by a new plastic process used for the "cocooning" of ships and planes in periods of idleness. This process is also used to weather-seal the points at which the skeleton steel rises through the roof-lines.

In both interior and exterior decoration a feature has been made of the lightness and tractability of cane and its similarity in form to the tubular steel. It has been used for the arches which define the tops of the box bays, the infilling above the window shutters, the orchestra rail, and the balconies of windows and bar. It has also been used as an applied texture to simulate louvres on the window shutters, and as decoration to box ends and handrails. A similar quality of lightness is obtained by the heavy-gauge fishing net used to fill in between stairs and handrails. All this tracework is thrown into



THE RIVERSIDE THEATRE

(Designer, Guy Sheppard. Architects: Harrison & Seel, A.A.R.I.B.A.)

Above: Interior from the Circle Below: Exterior from Riverside Promenade



relief by the dark green of the glass velour on the walls, or dark red of the plush upholstery and swag curtains over the boxes, which feature not only as decoration but as acoustic absorbent. Ceilings, apart from the sound-board, are of drafted fireproof muslin in cerulean blue. The box fronts are carried out in yellow in designs derived from the Juvenile Drama, and the sound-board ceilings painted in with Cupids and clouds in the traditional manner. All these painted surfaces were executed on canvas away from the site by Edward Delaney, and were glued into position when ready, thus saving considerable time. A final touch of glitter is added by numerous chandeliers made of plastic, and especially designed to make use of standard pressings and manufacturing methods. The use of this material instead of glass has meant a great saving in weight, and the provision therefore of a much greater number of sources.

The Georgian forestage allows entry of actors through proscenium doors for front cloth scenes, above which are oval windows, through which actors might appear or spotlights shine. At the sides of the proscenium this forestage is cut away to allow on the prompt side a small stage for the chairman, and on the O.P. the pianist can observe the whole stage, yet the piano under the forestage in the orchestra pit does not obscure the stage picture. The whole of the apron stage is removable to disclose this orchestra pit for opera or ballet, and in it some sixteen performers can be accommodated.

The stage itself has a proscenium opening of 24 feet width, by 14 feet high, and is 21 feet deep by 38 feet overall width. There is no true "grid" but eighteen sets of hemp lines are provided, the pulleys clipped to special tubular girders in the roof trusses, and giving a flying height of 30 feet. Three counterweight sets control the fire curtain of asbestos cloth painted

as a Victorian advertisement cloth, the painted front curtain, and a special proscenium for puppet shows, whose opening is adjustable to the different sizes required by different companies. The stage floor is level, and scene-doors in the back wall enable scenery to be loaded directly on or off a lorry floor which would be at the same level. Around the stage there are the offices of stage manager, props and electrics.

Stage lighting is straightforward. Eight spots in a forward position between the two sections of the sound-board, and six in two-perch position down stage from the proscenium doors provide adequate lighting of the fore-stage, and the stage equipment consists of a spot bar (twelve circuits) No. 2 batten, and a cyclorama batten of 500-watt floodlights. There are the usual dips, and plugs for around stage lighting: in all some forty-eight ways, the whole controlled from the latest type Strand Electric Electronic desk situated in the circle. An interesting offshoot of the tubular steel construction of the stage tower and proscenium frame is that it is possible to clip a lamp onto it in many positions where a tall stand or a boom would be a serious inconvenience. Dressing rooms and lavatory accommodation are under the stage, and while necessarily small are adequate for the theatre's particular requirements.

This, then, is a brief description of a theatre built especially for entertainment in a Pleasure Gardens, and it would have many drawbacks to use for normal work. But it could be adapted easily as a permanent building, and the saving of cost against one of normal construction is remarkable. It has indeed justified itself as an experiment in design, and as a demonstration of what a theatrical building should do, although at present its capabilities are not being made full use of. Let us hope that it may continue to grace the London theatrical scene for more years than were originally contemplated.

ANTIPODEAN ADVENTURE

I. NEW ZEALAND

by *E. Martin Browne*

I AM writing about New Zealand from Australia, where my wife and I have just arrived. To do this reminds me once more of two facts of geography which my brain had not registered clearly until the last few weeks, but which I now see as conditioning the whole future out here. First, it is nearly 12,000 miles from Britain to New Zealand. And Britain is "home" to every New Zealander. They reckon that a quarter of the population visits "home" at least once in a lifetime; but even in spite of this amazing fact, New Zealand is still an isolated country. The main streams of the world's culture, and particularly of British culture, have not flowed through it; and though it has the will and the energy to develop itself, it needs regular and constant contact with older countries, and most of all with Britain. In every place we visited we found this hunger expressed not only in words spoken with an obvious sincerity, but also in the attention given to every new play, every new book on the theatre, and in the serious study which an appreciable number of people were making of its history and nature. It was quite obvious that a supply from home of the right people and the right literature would meet a real demand and satisfy a real need.

The other geographical fact is that New Zealand is 1,200 miles from Australia. It takes as long to go to Australia by ship as it takes an Englishman to go to America. The establishment of trans-Tasman air services has of course made contact easier; but I do not think it will alter the way in which the two countries regard one another. They have grown up separately in the last hundred years;

each has achieved its own prosperity through a tremendous effort of human will; and neither thinks of itself as in any sense one with the other—I cannot stress this too strongly, because we in England are so apt to miss its significance. Few Australians are actively interested in New Zealand, and the New Zealander feels himself far more closely bound to "home" than to Australia. This bond it is our responsibility to maintain.

In theatre, New Zealand's is not an easy problem. The total population of the whole country is only two millions. Half of this is in four cities—Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin—two on each island, and with about 800 miles between them. This does not make an adequate circuit on which to finance even a 1,200 mile journey from Australia, let alone a 12,000 mile journey from England, for a commercial company of the first class, and the consequence has been that visits have been sporadic and mostly of poor quality. The advent of the "talkies" has done harm in greatly reducing the amount of live professional theatre: but it may in the long run have done good by making the New Zealander demand work of the best standard.

His need at present is to learn how to assess what that standard is. The Oliviers visited New Zealand in 1948 and their work was a revelation. Their name is still on every tongue, and the visit quite obviously revolutionised everyone's conception of theatre. If other companies of that calibre—and nothing less will be of any use—could go out every few years, we should be doing New Zealand a great and necessary service. But such banquets can be only occasional, and the regular

fare of New Zealand cannot be as rich as that. Furthermore, it neither can, nor, I think, ought to be provided from overseas; the country itself should build up its own theatrical profession. In a population of two millions, that can only be done on a very limited scale indeed; but I believe that it can be done successfully, if it is done in the right way.

In order to explain that condition, I must describe what we found in New Zealand. We were the guests of the British Drama League there, and travelled over most of the country during our five weeks' stay. I need hardly testify to the warmth of New Zealand's welcome, since it is famous; but I am nevertheless glad to do so. We were entertained royally (once literally in a royal suite!); flowers, the profusion of which in the New Zealand winter amazed us, were our greeting everywhere; we were made to feel that our very presence, as well as what we had to give, was a satisfaction of that hunger to which I have referred. The organisation, directed by the tireless and capable Dominion President, Stan Campbell, was excellent and made an arduous programme as easy as possible to fulfil. Our time was too short to allow of our seeing many New Zealand shows, especially as we were kept busy with talks and Drama Schools. The impressions I shall record may therefore be reckoned superficial, but are at least the result of a genuine attempt to learn and understand.

New Zealand's own theatre is at present entirely amateur. It falls broadly into two categories. The four big cities have what are called "Repertory Companies." These are large dramatic societies, having a theatre which they either own or use regularly, a loyal audience-membership and a powerful producing organisation. One of them, the Christchurch "Rep" employs a salaried producer, and at the moment is lucky enough to have our own Robert Young in that position. These societies dominate the large cities;

and there are quite a number of similarly dominant "reps" in the medium-sized towns, which again have the bulk of the acting talent. These companies are associated—rather loosely and vaguely—in the New Zealand Drama Council, which besides caring for their specific needs, aims at building up a national theatre organisation; so far, its most important work has been in supplying Drama Schools.

All the "Reps" belong to the New Zealand Branch of the British Drama League, which also includes the considerable number of smaller groups in both urban and rural districts. It is organised differently from the parent body in Britain. As it was started first in certain particular areas, and did not until recently have an effective headquarters, the fourteen Area Committees have wide powers. There is some difficulty, therefore, in establishing effective services on a national scale; but the local bodies are now realising how necessary it is to do so.

The League is so far active mainly in the one-act play field, and runs a good national Festival. I judged the final of this, which was won by a New Zealand play of very good quality, *The Trap*. I also saw a couple of preliminary rounds, and a healthy variety of plays had been chosen of a standard as good as in the National Festival at home. The obvious need was training in production; there was a good deal of freshness and virility about the acting, but it was mostly quite untutored, and one saw the actors struggling to find means of expression.

The League works in close liaison with Adult Education. New Zealand's university life is organised as a single whole, and each of the four Regions has a Council of Adult Education. These Councils send staff tutors into the countryside, and drama is among their most popular subjects. They deal with theatre on a practical basis first, and use that to develop an historical and literary interest. The

results are comparable with those obtained at Hull under Professors Searls and Mayfield. The country-folk are showing an interest in the theatre quite as intelligent, and at least as single-hearted, as those in the big city societies. The appointment last year of John Trevor, an Englishman with a wide theatre experience, to the University staff at Dunedin is a highly successful experiment: he is working both in the English Department with students who are specially interested in theatre and as an extra-mural tutor, and is already influencing the whole region.

The Regional Council at Auckland runs the only professional company in New Zealand. It is part of the Community Arts Service, which takes the Arts to the people on a plan not unlike that of our Arts Council. The producer, Mr. Baigent, is a member of the University staff, and he recruits his company for each tour of about three months' duration. They play on a "fit-up" basis in all the towns and villages of the Region and do very good business. It does not pay its way, but the subsidy required is not large. We saw, and assisted at, a rehearsal besides having long talks with and about the company. Its standards, especially in presentation, (New Zealand is apt to be slapdash, we found) are criticised, but its genuineness and vigour are greatly appreciated. Here is a leader who spends himself for love of the theatre; and he is putting on plays in conjunction with the University tutors' work of developing theatrical culture. This surely offers the best available basis on which to build, gradually, a small theatrical profession.

The training of recruits could not be done in New Zealand; and there is a sound system of Government bursaries to the English Drama Schools. The problem at present is that the trainees often do not come back. There is no future, as things are, for an actor in New Zealand; and until there is some

prospect of regular employment, all the best young people will be tempted to plunge into the overcrowded English profession. We spent a lot of our time discouraging them, but we saw that only in teaching and radio was there a living at present. So the problem is urgent, though the solution cannot be quick. A top-heavy scheme for a full-blown "National Theatre" company, competing in the big theatres, could only be launched at astronomical cost, and could hardly hope to gather enough regular support to keep it going even after several years of heavy loss. A quieter beginning, with productions of a simple but imaginative kind done really well, offers much better possibilities.

New Zealand is a country of the future. Anyone who has skill, and is prepared to work, is welcome. Men build their own houses—usually with the painted corrugated iron roof that characterises the landscape. They have a quiet, unaggressive confidence in themselves and their country. It is a beautiful country, too; and though man has done little to make his own habitations more than just useful, he has done much to cultivate and beautify the land. You can feel the lack of a past, and nowhere more than in the theatre; but that lack can be made up for by drawing on the English heritage, which New Zealand regards as belonging to it. And you can look forward to a future which stretches well ahead, and shows every promise of being bright.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

May I be allowed to point out that I do not, as your reviewer states, advocate the rebuilding of the Globe Theatre in my book, *Producing Shakespeare*. I make altogether different proposals.

Yours faithfully,
C. B. PURDOM
Welwyn Garden City.

AMATEURS IN TRAINING



Michael MacOwan demonstrates Rennie Barker's model of the Globe Theatre in the Shakespeare Course.

Students improvise the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" in the General Course.



DARTINGTON, 1951



A student from the West Indies making a head-dress for "The Masque of Hope." Behind him are his costume designs for this production, made in the Technical Course at the British Drama League Summer School.

NEWS AND VIEWS

GEOFFREY WHITWORTH died on September 9th after an illness of a few hours. The British Drama League is thus robbed of its Founder and Chairman and the theatre has lost a distinguished and devoted servant. This number of DRAMA seeks to commemorate his life and work.

DRAMA owes its foundation and its policy to Geoffrey Whitworth. He gave it a dignified standard of journalism and a wide conception of the art with which it deals; under his guidance it took an international and impartial view. Though he retired from the editorship in 1948, he retained a keen and fertile interest in the magazine to the end.

From the Director who, as we go to press, is touring New Zealand and Australia under the auspices of the British Drama League and the British Council, we have received this message:—

The British Drama League is the creation of Geoffrey Whitworth for the initial idea was born in his brain. The man who can thus build an entirely new organisation is a rare person indeed. He followed this achievement by thirty years of far-sighted direction and unremitting work. More striking even than the League's rapid growth in size is the multiplicity of interests and contacts he developed. In Education, for instance, he saw the Drama as playing an integral part at a time when few had considered such a possibility, and at every level from primary to university he established contact with the keenest minds in the field. He saw the needs of the playwright, of the actor in relation to the manager, of private enterprise in relation to the State and the Local Authority, of the community in relation to the theatre, and time and

again he took the lead in bringing these needs to public notice. He enriched the life of our theatre by bringing the work of scholars to the attention of producers, by promoting exhibitions of theatrical history and design, by furthering the visits of foreign companies and speakers to our shores, and by the establishment of international theatre organisations and conferences. And throughout all this varied activity he was the servant of the great amateur theatre movement which the League had done more than any single body to help and crystallise.

That movement, in the turbulent vigour of its growth, has often been divided about his policy, but it will have no hesitation in acknowledging what it owes to him. Because the League was never an amateur organisation, but spoke for the whole theatre, it was and is uniquely placed to urge upon the nation and its authorities that the mighty growth of amateur drama had a national significance. Though he worked for the theatre, he never lost sight of the interests of his members; the League was a practical means of help as well as the banner of a cause.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE for Geoffrey Whitworth was held on October 2nd in the Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street. A moving and beautiful address was given by the Warden of New College, Oxford; Mr Nicholas Hannon read the Lesson. Among the large congregation gathered to pay their tribute were distinguished members from every branch of the theatrical profession; the President, Vice-Presidents, Treasurer and Members of the Council of the League; representatives of kindred organisations; individual members of the League and delegates from affiliated societies; and some fifty members of its staff, past and present.

THE CONFERENCE AND AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK for 1952 (May 30th—June 7th) will be held in Harrogate, which proved such a popular choice in 1949. It is hoped that the Week will be representative of the most interesting amateur work in the North of England. A preliminary outline of the programme will be circulated to all B.D.L. members in the New Year. Those wishing to book accommodation or secure early information about the programme should write now to the Secretary of the League.

THE HEADQUARTERS APPEAL FUND, opened to reduce the mortgage of £18,000 on the League's premises, collected £560 up to October 31st, from members whose subscriptions were renewable during the summer months. The Council is most grateful for this support and hopes for a generous response also from the rest of the membership, who will be circularised as their subscriptions become due.

SHAKESPEARE WAS PERFORMED IN YUGOSLAVIA when extracts from "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "Romeo and Juliet," "Twelfth Night," "Hamlet," and "Henry V" were given early in September by the London Players who visited Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. This account of the visit from one of the leaders of the company shows the enthusiasm with which it was received:

With the cultural awakening of recent years, and the thirst for literary contacts with the West, and with England in particular, Yugoslavia is developing a remarkable enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Out of this enthusiasm, through the kindness and interest of Dr. Klajn of the National Theatre, Belgrade, came an invitation for a group of London amateur players to visit that country under the auspices of the British Drama League. After a strenuous, exciting and exhilarating

ten days, this group has now returned from their tour, bringing with them memories of lovely theatres with intimate tiered auditoriums, the eager help of back stage staff confining their natural volubility to the German language, the agonising limitations of opera house lighting and the sweeping enthusiasm of packed audiences many of whom were prepared to sit out a four-hour performance when, as happened in Zagreb, we played our full repertoire.

The generosity of our welcome by audiences, official hosts and the amateur groups who provided for our entertainment was a great national gesture. We felt, too, that the keen interest aroused in our methods of production, and particular moments of applause, were a tribute to our choice of programme and the work we had put into it. Our problem was to interest both those at ease in the English language and acquainted with our literature and the many for whom knowledge of our language was still an aspiration: our total audience in Ljubljana was 900, in Zagreb 2,000, and in Belgrade 2,000. Visual values were necessarily given prominence in our wardrobe, in the use of lighting and in the inclusion in our programme of Falstaff's adventure in the buck basket and the rise and fall of Malvolio. Fluency was also considered to be imperative in production and in the use of simple sets with a curtained inner stage, or stylised sets with multiple use, for quick scene changes. Shakespeare's poetry in his native tongue, about which we felt a special responsibility, was represented by long lyrical excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*, Hamlet's soliloquies and Henry's speech on the eve of Agincourt, all these plays being well known to the audiences from translations or from the films.

The visit was a most successful experiment, and all concerned would

wish to see it repeated under similarly favourable conditions. For our part, we hope that on such another occasion, time might also be found for us to become better acquainted with the work of our friends in the amateur theatre in Yugoslavia.

WILLIAM KENDALL

PLAYWRIGHTS ready to offer new plays for production, and dramatic societies seeking new plays to produce, are responding well to our invitation that they should submit their names for inclusion in the lists which are being prepared. Will anyone in either category who has not yet done so, send their name and address to the Secretary of the B.D.L. as the sub-committee set up to consider the lists will be meeting shortly.

THE MERMAID THEATRE FESTIVAL, which was the occasion of Kirsten Flagstad's farewell to opera, opened on September 10th for a 28-day season consisting of performances of Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas," Julius Gellner's production of "The Tempest" and several afternoon recitals. The following is a short report from one who was closely identified with the project:

Bernard and Josephine Miles were inspired by Madame Flagstad, three years ago, to launch this venture and build their long-dreamed-of replica of an Elizabethan stage in the large hall in their garden in St. John's Wood. It was the last project to which Ivor Novello gave his support and it was made possible by generous gifts of time, money and material. The stage was built by unemployed film-studio craftsmen, its form and decoration being the result of collaboration between Michael Stringer and Walter Hodges.

An annual festival is planned for the Mermaid stage, which lends itself to perfection for plays of all kinds, including revue and excepting modern drawing-room comedy. It has been specially built for mobility, it being the Miles's intention to

tour after the close of this festival, not only through the provinces but overseas as well. Enquiries for membership should be addressed to the Mermaid Theatre, 43a Acacia Road, London, N.W.8.

NAOMI LUTYENS

THE TAVISTOCK REPERTORY COMPANY, still without a home large enough to cater either for its growing public or for its own large company of players and technicians, opened its 1951-52 season with "The Way of the World" at the Rudolph Steiner Theatre in London. They have planned a further production to take place there on February 11th and 12th. The Company will of course still give regular productions in its own fully-equipped Christchurch Studio Theatre in Albany Street.

STAGE LIGHTING SPECIALISTS
open West End Showroom:

At 44 Monmouth Street, London, W.C.2, the new premises of Major Equipment Co. Ltd., a full range of stage lighting apparatus and a selection of cold cathode fittings, interchangeable letters and Neon signs, is available for demonstration. A Service Department is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

PRIVILEGE OF MEMBERSHIP No. 5:
Messrs. Faber & Faber Ltd. have agreed to supply members of the League with Geoffrey Whitworth's recently published book "The Making of a National Theatre," at half price—12s. 6d. instead of 25s. Orders should be sent to the B.D.L. Bookshop.

**A DIRECTORY
of
DRAMA ADJUDICATORS**

Copies may be obtained
by Festival Secretaries
:: on application to ::

Hon. Secretary:

GUILD OF DRAMA ADJUDICATORS
26 Bedford Square - London, W.C.1.

THEATRE BOOKSHELF

THE Nō PLAYS

"*The Nō Plays of Japan*," by Arthur Waley. Allen & Unwin. 18s.

Arthur Waley is an acknowledged expert and this book, which is without a rival, has long been unobtainable, so that this reprint is very welcome. Only the title page and contents table are reset and the book stands as it did when it first appeared in 1921.

Mr. Waley's Introduction is admirable for scholars and sets out much detailed information about the early days when Nō drama was being newly written and crystallised from old tales. I feel he does not make vivid enough for the ordinary reader the profound likenesses to and differences from the serious drama of Ancient Greece, such as the plays of Sophocles. The Nō are short like the Greek, each taking about an hour to perform. They have few characters, but whereas the Greek plays deal with heroes as they were in their lives or legends, the Nō deal essentially with the situations created by the ghosts of what were real (or legendary) people returning and coming into fresh contemporary contact with living people.

In the Nō there is often a conversation during a journey, leading to the revelation that one of the speakers is actually the ghost of a person who used to live in, or had been associated with, the district through which they are now passing. The ghost then tells his or her earthly story and is exhorted or "shiven" by a wise person or priest. With some obsession or sorrow resolved, the ghost fades away.

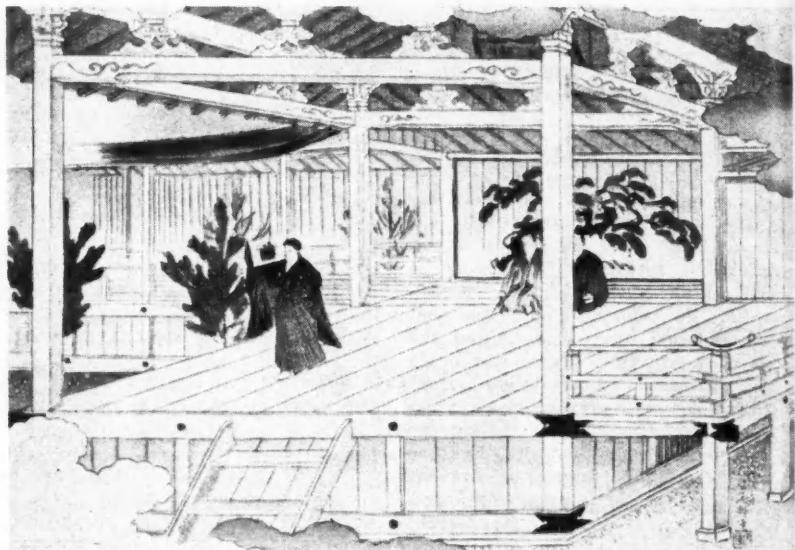
The Nō is an art form *sui generis*. The scripts date from antiquity, many of them written in the middle of the fourteenth century, and few of any significance later than the sixteenth century. In the world of drama they are unique, for performed by serious actors in Japan in this century they are

identical not only as regards words and music, but every movement of the actor transmitted from one actor to another for centuries.

When I lived in Japan I saw many Nō, and had a neighbour who practised almost nightly. Nō has a rare capacity to open doors into the incommunicable that cannot be conveyed in any book. The singing and music are essentials of its texture. The Nō seems to me much more akin to opera than a reader would gather from Mr. Waley's book. At no time do any of the characters speak mere prose or in an ordinary conversational voice. The difficulties of translation from such a remote language as Japanese are of course, immense, as well I know: but the prosy prose Mr. Waley uses for many of the conversations gives no indication of the definite rhythm and remarkable intonation used on the stage. In addition every word is "sung" with a peculiar form of breath control.

The musical instruments are varieties of drums and flutes. The musicians tap some drums with remarkable intensity with the fingers or palm of the hand, some with a stick. The chorus intones and often picks up the words of the singers. To learn a part requires years of study, and when I was in Japan head professors, members of the aristocracy, students, and many thoughtful people were profoundly interested not only in attending performances, but in learning a character's songs for themselves till they could achieve perfection and be allowed to take part in an actual performance. It was necessary to be present at many performances of the same opera to recognise the subtleties of movement, even of hand and foot. The characters in each play are few; three, four, or five, and the stage bare of all but a symbolic painted pine tree and perhaps a little bamboo shelter or some trifle.

VIEW OF THE NO STAGE
(From "Plays of Old Japan," by Marie C. Stopes.)



Most of the actions, such as ladling water, erasing a poem from a sheet of paper, or whatever it may be, are mimed with the fan which all singers carry. The costumes are magnificent; hand embroidered, brocaded, and often in vivid colouring. No coloured illustrations are given in Mr. Waley's book, but readers should take Mr. Waley's advice and study the illustrations obtainable in the British Museum.

Mr. Waley translates nineteen Nō and gives summaries of others. *In toto* these convey something of the feeling invoked by the performance of these operas. All are serious; nearly all based on the belief in the survival of the soul of man after this life; nearly all incorporate some Buddhist teaching; all are interwoven with poetry and profound though restrained emotion.

It is a very welcome portent that there should be a demand for this reprint of Mr. Waley's book, but good as it is, it can raise but a shadow, an

echo, of the profound emotions real performances engender. I hope it will stimulate those who read it to endeavour to experience a living production.

MARIE C. STOPES

POET PLAYWRIGHTS

"Auden, An Introductory Essay," by Richard Hoggart. Chatto and Windus. 12s. 6d.

"Christopher Fry, An Appreciation," by Derek Stanford. Peter Nevill. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Hoggart, in his "Introductory Essay" on Auden, gives us a commentary so careful, so scrupulous, that if at times he may have misinterpreted the poet one feels that the poet himself is largely to blame. He does not dwell a great deal on the sheer verve of the early poems, the lyrical spontaneity which no amount of cerebration could confine, but he does show a continuity of development throughout all Auden's work. In the end, indeed, we are left to wonder that he, who of all his contemporaries

made the greatest effort to reach a wider public, should have become more exasperatingly obscure than any of them.

That effort took its most enterprising form in the three plays of the Thirties. Mr. Hoggart, I think, rather underestimates both their influence and their effectiveness—especially that of *The Ascent of F 6* which, in spite of all its tricks, its fashionable oddness, its occasional hollowness of speech and character, did attain a broadness and vitality of symbolic meaning beyond, or at least outside, the calculations of the author. Its influence, however, has had no apparent effect on Christopher Fry. Mr. Fry has many of the gifts which Auden lacked—a sense of theatre, of technique, of all the tips and taps that make the wheels go round. He is also, as Derek Stanford claims, a more serious writer at heart than most of his critics, and even most of his admirers, will allow. But I cannot think that he is a poet. The verse of the earlier plays is commendably restrained, while that of *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, if more decorated, is unpretentious, and matches the amusing and dexterous plot. In the two popular comedies, however, Mr. Fry has changed to a froth of unorganised prettiness and whimsy-whamsy poeticism. There are goblets of undigested and undirected imagery; gems like:—

“ . . . flocks of girls, who look
So lately kissed by God.”

Mr. Fry, I emphasise, has undoubtedly gifts, but in giving uncritical approbation to such perversions of the art of poetry, Mr. Stanford is doing no good service either to the playwright, to his audiences, or to the drama.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

A TO Z

“The Oxford Companion to the Theatre,”
ed. Phyllis Hartnoll. O.U.P. 35s.

“Theatre and Stage,” ed. Harold Downs.
Pitman. Two Vols. £7.

When one gets over a feeling of awed admiration for Miss Hartnoll’s

achievement in marshalling an encyclopaedic volume of nearly 900 pages, one begins to look for what is not there. Why Kaufman and not Rattigan? Why Quartermaine and not Guinness? Why Atkins and not Wolfit? Why Whelan and not Bennett? Surely we could have spared an occasional Eichelbaum and Bergopzoomer for some of these familiar and respected names? The entry on Coward is so perfunctory that it mentions no revue later than 1928 and no musical since 1929. The bibliography on Shakespeare is arbitrary: three books on the Comedies (which is almost all there are) to one on the Tragedies; one on political characters, instead of the obvious one on the Histories; nothing on the Roman plays and the final plays; Coleridge, Hazlitt and Bradley but no Dowden. The *Companion* is a fascinating and indispensable work of reference, but it will need a systematic revision before it can claim to be reasonably consistent in covering its chosen field.

Theatre and Stage is also an encyclopaedic work arranged on the alphabetical system, its two massive volumes containing some sixty essays designed as “guide to the performance of all amateur dramatic, operatic, and theatrical work.” The volumes are undated and as far as one can discover they represent a very partial revision of an older work. Only that would account for a large number of peculiarly unattractive illustrations. Now while any intelligent theatre-goer may want to know something about most of the hundreds of topics dealt with in Miss Hartnoll’s single volume, few even of the most enthusiastic amateurs will be able to take practical advantage of the full-page colour plate showing the recommended make-up for an American Indian (Sioux), or profit much by the illustration of “The Gilbertian Small Boy as he appears in *The Yeoman of the Guard*—self-possessed yet self-effacing.” We are obliged to be frank. The volumes seem hardly

worth £7 and represent an odd lapse on the part of a publisher who has supplied us, and continues to do so, with many of our most valuable, up-to-date and inexpensive text-books.

ROY WALKER

LIFE STORIES

"Life Over Again," by C. B. Purdom. Dent. 18s.

"The Cochran Story," by Charles Graves. W. H. Allen. 17s. 6d.

"Ivor Novello," by Peter Noble. Falcon Press. 12s. 6d.

"Fonteyn," by William Chappell. Rockliff. 21s.

In *Life Over Again*, C. B. Purdom suggests that his experiences are shared by most of us, but not everyone has had so varied a career. His book is a surprising record of joys and sorrows, vicissitudes and successes; almost every facet of modern life seems touched upon, and although a love of detail makes for tediousness, everyone will read on to see what Mr. Purdom is going to do—and say—next.

Any competently written account of Charles Blake Cochran's career is bound to be exciting, and Charles Graves has given us (with some padding) the history of an outstanding personality. Many glittering successes are recorded, but, oddly enough, the book is more a record of equally glittering failures, demonstrating afresh the precariousness of ventures dependent on the extraordinary whims of either public or press. But the great showman was equal to any reverses, and, indeed, appeared to thrive on them.

Reverses do not colour Peter Noble's book on Ivor Novello. The few setbacks mentioned are treated as blessings in disguise, and virtually every page is a success story. Indeed, the great Ruritanian star was not only phenomenally successful, but remained comparatively unspoilt, and would hardly have subscribed to all Mr. Noble's extravagant praises. The book was written during Novello's lifetime, and, apart from the cover, contains no

reference to the sudden end of so many gallant enterprises.

Praise is also the key-note of William Chappell's *Impressions of Fonteyn*, but it is evidently impossible to write about ballet without a cascade of superlatives. Underneath the cascade, however, Mr. Chappell, while worshipping Fonteyn, has a sense of proportion. He has also a cat complex, but the macabre creatures who frolick across his pages have, surely, little affinity with the grave, spiritual beauty of Fonteyn shown in the photographs by Cecil Beaton. F. SLADEN-SMITH

"WORLD THEATRE"

Vol. I, No. 1. I.T.I. Quarterly. 6s.

The International Theatre Institute is well justified by this publication, which illustrates what may be called the functional approach to international friendship. It is by working with people of another country that one gets to know them and to like them, or to dislike them for the right reasons instead of for the wrong. *World Theatre* is published in English and French, and it suffers, inevitably, from the handicap of all bi-lingual reviews; few of the articles appear as they were originally written. Where it is only a question of giving information, it does not greatly matter, but any thorough-going criticism is hampered by it. In this English edition Mr. Philip Hope-Wallace's admirable essay on "The English Stage and its Poets" easily comes out on top. But then Mr. Hope-Wallace is not only the best dramatic critic now writing in England; he is also writing on his home ground. Next in interest, and for a similar reason, is Miss Margo Jones on the Arena Theatre in America. She explains in clear technical detail how this method works and suggests why it is becoming so popular. Only by escaping from the proscenium can the theatre challenge the commercial interests which are strangling it. The arena gives it spiritual as well as spatial freedom.

World Theatre wisely relies for much

of its effect on photographs, and these are often worth a column of comment. It is fascinating to compare Mario Chiari's decor for Anouilh's *Eurydice* with Peter Ashmore's production of the same play in London, or Zeffirelli's *A Streetcar Named Desire* with the set we admired in London and New York, or Visconti's *Crime and Punishment* with Anthony Quayle's.

A publication of this kind would be difficult, if not impossible, to launch now without official support; the same kind of enlightened patronage, which has done so much to decentralise the Theatre in France, is here placed at the service of information. Anyone working seriously in the Theatre is the better for knowing what his fellow-artists are doing elsewhere.

ROBERT SPEAGHT

ELIZABETHANS

"*Shakespeare Survey 4*," ed. Allardyce Nicoll. Cambridge University Press. 12s. 6d.

"*Macbeth*," ed. Kenneth Muir. The Arden Shakespeare. Methuen. 12s. 6d.

"*Readings on the Character of Hamlet, 1661-1947*." Compiled by Claude C. H. Williamson. Allen & Unwin. 45s.

"*Elizabethan Acting*," by B. L. Joseph. O.U.P. 12s. 6d.

"*Christopher Marlowe*," by Michel Poirier. Chatto & Windus. 10s. 6d.

"*Shakespeare of London*," by Marchette Chute. Secker & Warburg. 15s.

Shakespeare Survey, in its fourth year, is now an established institution. The wide range of its articles, its full critical review of the year's contribution to Shakespearian studies, and its accounts of international activities make it indispensable for reference. This year Professor Dover Wilson, in an exciting piece of detective work, re-affirms Malone's "Upstart Crow" argument. John Gielgud contributes a stimulating essay on tradition and style in the theatre. Professor G. F. Reynolds makes a spirited challenge to the alleged "Tarras" of the Globe Theatre, based not only upon the inadequacy of contemporary evidence, but also upon

the remoteness, the lack of immediacy and the loss of flexibility and freedom that results in "Elizabethan" performances if all hints in the dialogue about coming up or going down are too literally interpreted as references to the existence and use of an upper stage or stages. Richard David combines an admirably detailed account of the Old Vic's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Stratford's *Measure for Measure* with a study of the problems of producing the comedies on the modern stage—the most illuminating and substantial piece of dramatic criticism I have read for a long time.

Kenneth Muir's *Macbeth* launches the new edition of the Arden Shakespeare, general editor Professor Ellis-Fermor. This first specimen of Methuen's most praiseworthy enterprise is remarkable value for money, and Mr. Muir has done a sound job, with his text, commentary, notes and appendices all showing how much the student will benefit by a new Arden, embodying the findings and revisions of half a century of Shakespearian scholarship.

Claude Williamson's anthology of *Hamlet* criticism, arranged in chronological order, is a wide-ranging collection and will certainly achieve its avowed aim of stimulating the appetite of the general reader. There is value in its astonishing bulk, but too many of the passages chosen neither provoke thought nor contribute to knowledge, and one could wish that some attempt had been made, by imposing a more rigorous standard of selection, to concentrate upon items which illustrate most clearly the differing conceptions of the play and its hero which have succeeded each other, century by century.

Bertram Joseph's *Elizabethan Acting* studies the close relationship between the speech, action and gesture of the actor and the rhetorician. Though his interpretation of certain specific scenes will provoke some disagreement, his general thesis puts at the disposal of

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theatre students valuable material, which has hitherto been more familiar to educationalists, and his five plates from Bulwer's *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* (1644), illustrating the rhetorical gestures of the hand, will fascinate everyone—actors, producers and audience.

Professor Michel Poirier's *Christopher Marlowe* belongs to the older tradition of critical writing, which handles the facts of a dramatist's life and the literary and intellectual quality of his work without the dramatic and theatrical reference which takes the plays on to the Elizabethan stage for us. He fully appreciates and ably conveys Marlowe's worth as a poet, but believes that the plays "will no longer bear the test of performance" and that as a dramatist he belongs "to a bygone age which cannot be brought to life again"—an opinion in which recent revivals of *Faustus* have confirmed him. Before saddling Marlowe with the deficiencies of actor and producer, however, it is only fair to point out that, in the worst of these revivals, even the most obvious dramatic intentions of the author were so frequently ignored that the production cannot be used in evidence against him.

Shakespeare of London might be described as the background without the novel. It gives a picture of Elizabethan life, solid with detail drawn from the proper sources; and if some of its comments and conclusions are questionable there is no doubt of its author's genuine enthusiasm.

M. ST. CLARE BYRNE

EARLY TRAINING

"Children and the Theater," by Caroline Fisher and Hazel Glaister Robertson Cumberlege. 32s.

"Music, Movement and the Young Child," by Heather Gell. Harrap. 17s. 6d.

This book from the States will be of interest to anyone who sees in drama an important educational force. The authors describe what they call "an extra-curricular activity" in Palo Alto city, a small theatre in which children,

ranging from six to sixteen years, act plays for audiences of adults or other children. With a large membership there is now a continuous series of productions, and the centre has its own collection of costumes which can be loaned elsewhere. The theatre pays its way by members' subscriptions and the admission to plays, and it is helped by a subsidy from the City Council.

For a reader in this country it is interesting to note that this theatre is not part of a school, and is more recognisable as a Community Centre for children. The promoters differ from people here who believe in drama as a part of education, in that they have no doubts at all about the value of teaching children, even at an early age, to perform to adult audiences; in fact their convictions are carefully backed by educational principles. They claim that this small theatre is a laboratory in which special aptitudes and abilities are developed. But to enlightened teachers over here, these activities savour too much of exhibitionism and seem to ignore the individual and creative qualities of children's own dramatic powers.

The book is freely illustrated with photographs of the children, and it also includes detailed advice on costumes, properties, effects and make-up, and even "rules" for acting and directing plays.

Heather Gell is a musician and a graduate of the London School of Dalcroze Eurythmics. After some twenty-five years of teaching, training teachers, and broadcasting, she exerts an important influence on the teaching of music through movement in Australia. Miss Gell has now written a book which aims at giving teachers the benefit of her experience and her considered views on method and presentation. She makes it quite clear that the use of this book will not produce a specialist. But she has analysed her own ways of working with children in order to help class teachers, especially in Primary Schools. The book is

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D. M. HAMMONDS

RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PLAYS

"A Sleep of Prisoners," by Christopher Fry. O.U.P. 6s.

"The Makers of Violence," by Robert Gittings. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.

"Gerald of Wales," by K. M. Baxter. S.P.C.K. 3s.

"Antigone" and "Eurydice," by Jean Anouilh. Methuen. 8s. 6d.

"Don't Go Away Mad," by William Saroyan. Faber. 12s. 6d.

"Hassan," by J. E. Flecker. Heinemann. 4s.

The three first-named have a design in common, for all were written to be performed in church or chapter-house. Mr. Gittings's play about the martyrdom of St. Alphege, written for the Canterbury Festival, and Mrs. Baxter's, written for St. David's Cathedral, both read as *pièces d'occasion*, and as competent work. Mrs. Baxter's is in Tennysonian blank verse with occasional variants (or should one name Miss Sayers' as the prototype?), and might as well have been in prose, for all that the verse gives to the drama. Mr. Gittings's verse is more interesting, and his subject provided him with more possibilities in its dramatic sequence. But Mr. Fry alone of the three has managed to write a church play in which the limitation has become a liberation. In this narrative of prisoners shut up in a church, whose dreams of the Old Testament reveal the drama of their own existence, the form of the play has arisen from the form of the building as a piece of sculpture may spring from the shape and quality of a particular piece of stone. Like all his work, it acts better than it reads: for (to this reader at any rate) the whimsicality and lack of discipline in his poetry upset, in the more critical

air of the study, those dramatic effects which are so brilliant on the stage. The skill with which he has managed the transitions between his Biblical episodes without ever letting the interest drop or the repetition become monotonous, is remarkable. Only the all-important final speech, which should have driven home the meaning of the play, trails off into banalities: as is apt to happen when Mr. Fry needs to probe below the surface, his poetry has failed him.

This play, and Anouilh's *Antigone*, are the only ones of the batch which I have seen acted. Anouilh too is a poet of the surface, for all the tragedy of his themes: you will not learn anything profound about life from his versions of the Greek myths, but you will be immensely entertained, and you will have your emotions played upon by a master in the art. In the reading, one is rebelliously aware that the Orpheus myth is being sentimentalised: in the theatre, one would probably surrender to the dramatist's will.

Mr. Saroyan, on the other hand, is obviously writing to be read as much as to be seen—and how eminently readable he is. I should imagine that the first of his three plays, which is about a group of incurable cancer patients in a hospital struggling against death, might be unbearable on the stage. The second would be delightful: it describes the travels of a house (yes, literally—a wooden frame house); it shows Saroyan's characteristic fancy at its best; and luckily one need not trouble about the author's distillation of its allegorical message. In the last play of the three, the garrulity of the characters defeated me.

This new edition of *Hassan* in Heinemann's Drama Library has been prepared by Mr. Basil Dean, and has an introduction by him which tells the touching story of his correspondence with Flecker over the play, which its author did not live to see produced.

ANNE RIDLER

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"New Plays Quarterly," edited by John Bourne. No. 14. Rylee (Subscription.)

"The Nix and other plays," by Rosalind Vallance. Harrap. 6s.

"Mulcaster Market," by James Reeves. Heinemann. 2s. 6d.

"The Supper Dance" (1 m. 4 f.), "Family Party" (6 f.), "Spare the Rod" (1 m. 5 f.), "Her Best Foot Forward" (7 f.), "To Murder Mrs. Mortimer" (1 m. 4 f.),

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"Mother Mandrake" (9 f.), "Silence is Golden" (5 f.), by T. B. Morris. "Disturbed Reflections" (1 m. 6 f.), by Austin Taylor. International One-Act Plays. 2s. 8d.

This batch of short plays once more emphasises the melancholy fact that authors and publishers are still under the impression that any small incident, no matter how trivial, will do to make a one-act play for amateurs. This is a fallacy. However, John Bourne has never been an admirer of the trivial, and his *New Plays Quarterly* often contains plays worth considering. No. 14 is full of variety. There are two dramas: *Dimitrios* is a guerilla tragedy, and *Practising Deception* a neat thriller, despite the feeble title. *Pavane for Mary* is a well-written verse play. There are also two comedies: *Tony*, almost a farce, and *Hearts and Humours*, a delightful Victorian episode. *The Nix and other plays* is a collection of somewhat ambitious work for youthful players. *Pan's Christmas* is a striking

blend of the Christian and Pagan atmosphere; the other plays are based on various legends, and at the end there is an effective dramatised anthology. *Mulcaster Market* is published with two other plays, also for youngsters. Simple and filled with bustling life and humour, these medieval adventures should be entertaining.

Many of the plays are mainly for women; six of them are by Pamela Hansford Johnson and C. P. Snow. Four of these are comedies of which *Her Best Foot Forward*, with its picture of the inmates of a boarding house and their revolt, is the most satisfactory. They have also written a drama, *To Murder Mrs Mortimer*, and a Venetian romance, *The Pigeon with the Silver Foot*. *Flower of Youth*, is an interesting but somewhat unpleasing study, set in the Lake District, of a mental defective and his mother. In *Penny Plain* the dowdy Penny is to meet a young man, so good-natured friends in a girls' hostel transform her into a colourful vamp; the young man, however, prefers Penny plain. *Love on a Matchstick Spent* is described as a Mexican farce. Mexican it may be, but the story of poor, hen-pecked Pietro, carving a prayer on a matchstick which is burnt by mistake, has elements of tragedy. In *Late Extra Rameses IV*, a Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, visits a newspaper office with mildly amusing and (for the office) beneficial results. There are two religious plays. *Not Martyrs* is a rather diffuse picture of Christians under the Diocletian persecution. *Candlelight*, a pageant of the months, is a little disjointed, but gives opportunities for imaginative production.

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"*Half a Century of Entertainment*," by A. E. Wilson. Yates. 5s.

"*Theatre-going*," by Harold Downs. Thrift Books. Watts. 1s.

"*The Year's Work in the Theatre, 1949-50*." Longmans. 3s. 6d.

"*The Arts in Ulster*," Ed. Sam Hanna Bell. Harrap. 10s. 6d.

The English Stage is an honest piece of history, admirably selective in its facts, balanced in its judgments, rarely perceptive, perhaps, and lacking enthusiasms, but written by a scholar who has fully mastered his material and makes exciting reading of an intricate period. It is closely packed with information and a book to possess.

Mr. Wilson's book is of a very different kind, snippetty, gossipy, slightly but not unpleasantly nostalgic, and easy enough reading. That he refers to the plays of John Galsworthy, the author of *The Skin Game*, *Loyalties*, and one or two other masterpieces, as being "as dead as mutton" precludes the book from serious critical consideration, but it is admirably illustrated with photographs from Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson's far too little known collection. Mr. Downs's modestly priced essay is excellent value, discursive, provocative, touching the theatre, past and present, at a number of different points.

The Year's Work in the Theatre is an admirable survey. The contributions are authoritative and the whole thing is editorially succinct, direct, and complete. If it is to be an annual publication, its value and interest will rapidly increase with time.

The Arts in Ulster is another useful book of record, continuously well written and excellently produced for the money. If it is not of pressing general interest that is not the fault of the contributors so much as of the limited appeal of current artistic work in Northern Ireland.

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